

Let there be Light



Ian Lamming finds a Mazda stalwart to be an illuminating experience

HOW dark is it in the mornings? In fact, stumbling my way to the car park in pitch black, to the sound of owl hoots, I check my watch to make sure I'm not sleep walking through the middle of the night.

In such low levels of light all you want to do is head back to bed and rest your brain. So I'm ever so grateful to the new Mazda CX-3 for its brilliant lights – double meaning intended.

Not only do they offer daylight-like high intensity beams as the sun continues to loiter well below the horizon, they scatter radiance around the corners as the bulbs follow the steering. Rather than staring unhelpfully into fields on my country road trek to school, they continue to light the asphalt.

It's hard to believe CX-3 has been around since 2015 because it still looks great, fresh and modern. In a fickle world where shapes and sizes are soon eclipsed by the latest on-trend models, the Mazda still stands proudly on the drive.

But, time-wise, it has reached the stage of special limited editions and the top spec model is now called the GT Sport. It will be limited to a run of just 500.

For the extra moulah GT comes with tasty 18 inch alloys, specially coated for extra gleam, body enhancements featuring a sports styling kit with front, side and rear skirts with silver accents and a black rear roof spoiler.

Inside there is very nice tan premium Nappa leather and unique GT-Line floor mats. Ooh, ah, I hear you say.

Other new equipment includes heated, auto-power folding door mirrors, a heated steering wheel and a colour head-up display. In addition, a power adjustment and memory function has been added to the driver seat.

The overall effect is one of plushness, opulence, with a sporty edge. The satnav and infotainment set up offer the choice of easy to hand mouse knob affair or colour touchscreen.

It is all effective and easy to use. The interior fascia and dashboard, clocks and switches ooze quality. A great looking and tactile interior is also blessed by reasonable amounts of space and high levels of comfort. All good then? And there is a useful double-decker boot.

This particular GT comes with a modest on paper 120PS 2.0 petrol engine. Rev it and stir the slick six speed gearbox into action and it is fine but do not expect turbo-esque levels of torque because they are not there. Economy is good though and 43mpg came easily enough during my period of mixed motoring.

Under the skin there is plenty of gubbins with fancy names to control handling and keep you safe and new CX-3 benefits from the introduction of G-Vectoring Control that varies engine torque to optimise loading on the

wheels when cornering providing more precise handling and improved comfort. There are also subtle suspension revisions and increased sound insulation to improve cabin refinement. The Mazda Advanced Smart City Brake Support has been upgraded to include pedestrian detection too.

Since CX-3 was first launched a veritable swarm of SUVs now buzzes furiously around the collective heads of the buying public. Now seasoned, the Mazda still has the dynamics and appeal to remain a leading light.

Fact File

- Mazda CX-3 GT Sport
- Engine: 2.0 petrol
- Power: 120PS
- 0-62mph: 9.0 secs
- Top speed: 119mph
- Combined MPG: 47.9
- Transmission: Six-speed manual
- CO2 g/km: 137
- Price: £22,895.00